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LIGHT AT LAST.

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The little town of Claremont was celebrated for its pretty girls. The palm of beauty, however, was yielded universally to Jewell Hastings. Yet, strange to tell, although twenty-two, she had never had an acknowledged suitor; but there was not one of the boys who had grown up with her who would not have been proud and happy to have served her in any way.

There was one, young Harry Lawton, the doctor, who was oftener seen with her than any other.

When Harry's uncle, the best loved and most skillful physician in the town, passed from earth the folks transferred their confidence to his nephew and namesake. Thus it was that Harry, being Jewell's aunt's medical adviser—in fact, her adviser on *all* subjects—was thrown almost constantly in the beautiful girl's society. And she, like her aunt, placing full confidence in the young man, did not hesitate to call on him if she needed an escort at any time. Yet never for a moment did Harry Lawton draw any flattering inference regarding his position with Jewell. He understood her perfectly.

Jewell Hastings lived with her aunt, a maiden lady, whose worldly goods amounnted only to the little cottage in which they lived and a small amount of money, the interest of which supplied their necessary wants. The neighbors all knew exactly just their situation. But after a few years, when Jewell was eighteen, there began something that they could not understand. No girl in the little town dressed better; few as well. And as the years passed on her robes increased in elegance.

"Now, where do they come from?" "How on earth does she manage to pay for them?" were questions of the time and town.

Some of the wise folks declared she made money by embroidery, and that was *why* she never ran about like the other girls. But this was not much credited, for it was generally known that, admitting her dresses numbered but few, a year's hard work of *that* kind would not do it. And so the mystery remained to all but Doctor Lawton.

There was on a high eminence, in Claremont, an old mansion, once very elegant. For years it had been untenanted. At the time of the beginning of this story it was rumored to have been purchased by a family of great wealth, who were to occupy it. Very soon the windows were thrown open, and a band of workmen entered. Immediately after the completion of their work the new purchasers came—only a widow and her son.

A few days after their arrival Doctor Lawton sat reading in his office. A knock called his attention. In answer to his "Come in," a gentleman entered. Before one word had escaped his lips, Harry Lawton mentally exclaimed: "Here is the prince who may win our Jewell;" yet it was not merely the physical beauty that attracted the doctor, but the soul that beamed in his eye, the spirit that pervaded his entire bearing.

"Will you be kind enough to come with me immediately? My mother is extremely ill. I dared not trust a servant, as haste is all important. My name is Fielding. I have a conveyance here."

Doctor Lawton was drawing on his coat, while his visitor spoke.

A few moments' drive brought them to the mansion on the hill.

Mrs. Fielding's illness proved to be an attack of apoplexy, which required Doctor Lawton's attention through the night, and for several days after. During these visits quite an intimacy grew between Harry Lawton and Ernest Fielding. The favorable opinion formed on their first meeting daily increased, and Harry found himself continually thinking:

"Yes, they were made for each other."

Ernest Fielding was an artist; his soul filled with poetic visions. Every hour that Harry Lawton could spare from his patients and study was spent in the studio of his friend. During one of these visits it was that Harry spoke of Jewell, fancying some slight resemblance in one of the ideal faces.

“Go with me to church tomorrow, [illegible] will see her there. After, if you desire, I will get her permission to introduce you,” said Harry.

Gladly Ernest Fielding accepted the invitation. The next day, before entering the church, he expressed the desire to find Miss Hastings without Harry directing his attention.

There were at least a dozen beautiful girls that passed out of the church as Harry and his friend stood near the door.

When Jewell came, with expression of mingled admiration and surprise, Ernest Fielding moved slowly behind her out of the church-yard, Harry following beside him. Neither spoke until Jewell had passed out of hearing.

“Well?” Harry said.

“Of course, that was Miss Hastings. She is beautiful. If you can, present me as soon as possible.”

Jewell had not failed to notice the handsome stranger; and Doctor Lawton had a cordial consent to his bringing his friend the next evening.

As Harry Lawton had expected, very soon Ernest Fielding was loving Jewell with the full strength of his ardent, loving nature. Of course, Harry was his confidant, and to him he said:

“It seems as though my life had been almost a blank; that I never truly lived before I knew her. If I do not win her, the light of my life is lost. The world will be perfect darkness."

Little thought his friend how prophetic were his words.

"Nonsense, Fielding. You will win our Jewell, I feel sure. If she intended sending you from her she never would have permitted your getting near enough to think of winning her. Hope everything."

The next evening Fielding had been reading to her. Closing the book, he said, his voice trembling with emotion:

"Oh, how can I read to you of others' loves, when my heart is almost bursting to tell its own? Miss Hastings—Jewell, may I tell you?"

The beautiful eyes, which a moment before were raised to his, drooped. A rosy flush suffused the fair face.

"Oh, do you know how truly I love you?" he said, clasping the hand he had gained, and pressing it to his lips.

"I thought and hoped so," Jewell answered, raising her eyes, filled with truth and love, to his.

"Oh, do you mean this? Can it be that you will try to return some of the great love I give you, my precious Jewell? Dear love, I never before to-night have breathed or known another love. Speak, Jewell!"

"I love you!" she whispered low.

And Ernest was satisfied and profoundly happy.

"Good-night, sweet love. To-morrow I may come, or I shall think this joy only a bright, deceiving dream if I do not see you and hear one little loving word in the daylight."

Ah, a dream it was, as brief as bright. The next day, while waiting Ernest's coming, she received the following note:

"MY OWN JEWELL: An unexpected and pressing commission to P—— will prevent my being with you until this evening. I shall return by eight o'clock and hasten to you. Heaven bless and keep you, darling. Devotedly,

"ERNEST."

A few hours after the reception of this Jewell still was seated in her little parlor, when the servant, opening the door, said:

"Mrs. Fielding, Miss Jewell."

With a warm, bright smile Jewell extended her hand, and drew towards her guest the most comfortable chair.

An expression of suppressed admiration nearly escaped Mrs. Fielding's lips. And she thought:

"No wonder! She is beautiful enough to turn any man's brain." She said:

"Miss Hastings,"—the face was rigid and cold,—"my visit is not a pleasant one. Last night Ernest told me of this foolish affair." She hesitated. "Well, I may as well explain my business at once. But you must not tell Ernest I've been here. This morning I sent him off, to have the opportunity of seeing you.

I want him to marry a distant cousin. They were pledged to each other when babies."

"Rest assured, madam, I shall not enter any family unless they are happy and proud to welcome me. Your son shall never hear from my lips that his mother is not all he would wish her. Now, madam, if you will excuse me, I will bid you good afternoon."

That same afternoon Jewell left Claremont. Her aunt followed a few days after, leaving the cottage and its effects for Doctor Lawton to either sell or rent. When Ernest Fielding called that evening, to his infinite surprise and distress, he received the following:

"DEAR ERNEST: Last evening, when I told you I loved you, I meant it. You will doubt me now. Do not. I shall always love you, and pray to God daily to remove the obstacle to our union. An unforeseen circumstance separates us. Trust me, as I do Heaven, and pray that we may meet again, when no earthly power can separate us. Do not seek to find me. It would be useless, until the obstacle is removed. Then I will come to you.

"Only and truly yours, JEWELL."

Five years had passed since Ernest received this note. As he said, truly, the light of his life went out. Not quickly; gradually the terrible truth came. It seemed quite impossible for Doctor Lawton to arouse him to any interest in anything, except to lavish his wealth among the poor for miles around. Gradually he fell into miserable health, without an effort to arrest the disease.

It seemed as if Providence was expressing very decided disapproval of Mrs. Fielding's course. And she felt it. "Riches take unto themselves wings." And truly, so it was with hers. Except the house in Claremont and a few hundred dollars, all was gone.

Long ere this the mystery of Jewell's money-making was explained. From the stores of her brain she drew wealth. The whole country, and across the great waters, found delight in the gems of thought she gave to them. Mrs. Fielding knew of this, and in her remorse and regret, one day dropped a remark that fully explained all to her son. Too late then. Could she offer then to the world-renowned and gifted woman the wreck she had made?

A little note from Jewell to Doctor Lawton, with this sentence: "Tell me something of the Fieldings," carried to her the following:

"Possibly you may have heard that by the defalcation of their lawyer they are reduced almost to poverty. This, although to be deeply regretted, is nothing in comparison to Ernest's affliction. Long since, I discerned the approach of a dreaded malady. I did my best to arrest this. Finally I urged, and, indeed, entreated him to seek more efficient advice. But in vain. And now he is quite blind."

Five days after the mailing of this, Doctor Lawton was surprised beyond expression to see enter his office Jewell Hastings.

After the usual greeting, she said:

"Doctor, I want you to go with me to Mrs. Fielding. I will tell you now. She sent me from Ernest, five years ago. Perhaps she will let me come to him now. For his sake I will try."

After Doctor Lawton had introduced Miss Hastings to Mrs. Fielding, he would have withdrawn, but Jewell put out her hand, and said:

"Stay!" And turning again to Mrs. Fielding, she asked: "Is the young lady you wished as a daughter willing to marry Ernest now?"

"Nay. Why do you wish to taunt me with my misery? No, no."

"Think you of *any* whom you would wish that would be his wife?" Jewell continued.

"No, no. What has he to offer? Blind and poor, too."

"Not *one*? Think!" Jewell cried.

"Not one—unless—forgive me—unless it be *you*!"

"And *you*—what say *you*?" Jewell's calmness had all fled, and almost wildly now she placed her hand on Mrs. Fielding, and cried again: "Speak!"

"I would gladly. But oh, no, no! You, in your pride and beauty—"

"Would willingly, gladly, aye, *joyfully* marry him this day! Where is he? Nay, I will find him. I will call you soon, Doctor. Wait."

Her heart directed rightly. Gently she

opened the door, and with noiseless steps reached his side. Kneeling on a stool at his feet she threw off her hat, and resting her head on his breast, she took the thin, white hand and passed it over her hair, on her face, and pressed it to her lips.

"Oh, God! Can it be? Jewell!—oh, my darling!" Ernest cried, his whole frame trembling with emotion.

"Yes, love; here I am. All is right now. I shall never leave you again."

"Yes, yes; I cannot permit this sacrifice. I have nothing to offer now," he said, yet clasping her closer.

"Your love is the dearest thing on earth to me. Unless I have lost *that*, I shall stay," and she nestled her beautiful head closer to his own.

That evening there was a quiet wedding. Three days after Ernest Fielding, his wife and Doctor Lawton sailed for France.

After an absence of scarcely a year they returned to Claremont. Rapidly the joyful news spread through the surrounding country. Light had again been given to Ernest's life. By God's blessing on a French oculist's skill, a wonderful operation had been successful.

Doctor Lawton is not married. He is perfectly devoted to Jewell's little children. One, her namesake, he declares he shall marry some day. Stranger things have happened.